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Soviet Affairs
August 1954



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Moscow Uses Atomic Issue
To Stress "Peaceful Policy"

(Preliminary Report)

The USSR has continued to exploit popular anxiety over the future use of atomic energy in an attempt to broaden support for its policies and discredit those of the US. Following are recent developments in Soviet treatment of this issue:

(1) The Soviet Council of Ministers announced on June 30 that a 5,000 kilowatt atomic power plant had been placed in operation at an undisclosed site in the USSR on June 27, and "produced electric current for industry and agriculture in the neighboring region." Work was said to be under way to set up atomic power stations "with a capacity of 50,000 to 100,000 kilowatts." A lack of propaganda correlation between this announcement and earlier Soviet propaganda treatment of the issue of using atomic energy for peace suggested, however, that Moscow had not planned at the end of May to announce a specific achievement in this field.

(2) Although Soviet spokesmen, notably in the UN Disarmament Subcommittee took steps to play down the threat of retaliatory attack in favor of stress on the need for an unconditional ban on the use of atomic weapons, Moscow continued to use direct and indirect threats of atomic retaliation.

(3) The USSR continued to show itself sensitive in the Petitions Committee of the UN Trusteeship Council to any proposal which would have the effect of prohibiting or stigmatizing atomic tests in general, except in the context of a general ban on use of atomic weapons.

(4) At the same time, there were indications that Soviet spokesmen might be planning to blame US nuclear tests for recent natural disasters, particularly in Eastern Europe.

(5) In UN Disarmament talks and in its note of July 24 to the three Western Powers proposing a conference on European Security, the USSR spoke of the "exceptional importance" of agreeing to an unconditional ban of atomic and hydrogen weapons and a reduction of arms and armaments. It also reiterated that an agreement not to use nuclear weapons would be an important step forward."

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These developments represented in part an effort by Moscow to reconcile its propaganda line with conflicting policy considerations. Moscow's interest beginning last December in expressing bluntly fear in the West of Soviet atomic attack was clearly not consistent with Soviet condemnation of the use of nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, Moscow has typically ignored the contradiction and has continued both lines. At the same time, Moscow has stressed its "leadership" in the field of the peaceful use of atomic energy, but has been careful not to encourage its people to hope for an imminent resulting improvement in their standard of living. The USSR has undoubtedly wanted to exploit agitation in the West for a ban on tests, but has sought to do so in terms which would not inhibit its own freedom to test. In general, Soviet interest in making disarmament a symbol of Soviet interest in peace has been hampered by Moscow's unwillingness to offer an effective international control scheme. The Soviet leaders have ignored this, however, simply avoiding any detailed discussion of the mechanism of disarmament while focusing on the beguiling slogans of banning the bomb and using nuclear energy for peace.

Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy. The latest Soviet claim of progress in applying atomic energy for peaceful purposes recalled similar more expansive claims in 1949 in response to the report of the first Soviet atomic explosion (which TASS ascribed to "blasting... with the most up-to-date technical means.") Although the satellites in 1949 gave credence to a report that the USSR was using atomic energy to divert the Ob and Yenesei Rivers, the Soviet press appeared to place this action in the future. Under questioning at the UN General Assembly, Vishinsky stated flatly only that atomic power was used in the USSR for blowing up mountains -- a claim revived by the Hungarian organ Szabad Nep on July 2, with the assertion that the first Soviet atomic explosion took place in the Kara Kum desert and was used to move hills and big stones for the sake of industry. In the light of the recent announcement, it is of greater interest to recall the claim made by Radio Moscow on December 24, 1949, that "in the future the Soviet electric power industry will develop in the form of a single high voltage grid to include the first atomic and thermal electric power stations."

Soviet spokesmen have continued to speak in general terms of the importance of the peaceful use of atomic energy. In April and May 1950, however, Moscow was urging that attention be devoted to traditional power sources, warning that the application of atomic energy was a "matter of an entire epoch" and apparently seeking to discourage hope of imminent progress by making the peaceful application of atomic energy dependent on a prior agreement to ban the use of nuclear weapons. The effort of Pravda on May 29 to place on the US the blame for the breakdown of bilateral talks on the peaceful application of atomic energy was particularly curious. Pravda not only criticized any attempt to divert a small part of atomic material for peaceful purposes as a

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"deception" but explicitly denounced proposals in the US to use atomic materials to supply electric power -- the field in which it now claims progress -- ostensibly because they ignored the fact that during this process the "invaluable atomic raw materials" are converted into explosive fissionable materials which constitute the basis for the production of atomic and hydrogen weapons. Beginning on June 5, however, several Soviet commentaries attacking monopoly fear of competition from atomic industries and discounting US progress in this field may have been intended to foreshadow the announcement of Soviet success in the quest for atomic industrial power.

Soviet propaganda, suggests, therefore, that Moscow's concern at the end of May lest the US proceed unilaterally to establish an atomic materials pool and blame the USSR for lack of cooperation was the motivating factor behind the power plant announcement. The modesty of the claim (the plant appears to be little more than a pilot model capable of servicing a city of 5,000 families) suggests that it is sufficiently near completion to warrant an announcement. Conceivably, it is intended to be a prototype of atomic power plants ultimately to be incorporated into a high voltage grid.

Moscow has differed in its handling of the power plant announcement for domestic and foreign audience. Whereas Soviet broadcasts abroad spoke in glowing terms of changes "in our entire technology" and of an "abundance of energy" making "unnecessary hard physical work," articles for the Soviet people generally emphasized the extent of Soviet achievement in outdistancing the West in terms designed to fire enthusiasm without raising unrealistic hopes of an early improvement in living conditions.

UN Disarmament Talks. The UN Disarmament Sub-Committee, which met in restricted session in London from May 23 to June 22 on instructions of the full Commission, confirmed that there had been no shift on the subject of disarmament in Soviet thinking since 1947. The Commission began in July to review the report of its Sub-Committee in preparation for submitting its own report to the UN General Assembly. In the Sub-Committee the USSR refused seriously to discuss either a US working paper on the powers and functions of an international control organ or a British-French compromise paper outlining the stages in a disarmament program. The USSR insisted, instead, on discussing what it termed its "new" disarmament proposals introduced on June 11. These proposals provided for the signature of a convention incorporating familiar appeals for banning the use, production and storage of atomic weapons, establishing "control" (i. e. inspection mechanism), reducing armaments by one third within a year of signature of a convention, and banning air and naval bases on foreign territory as well as "war" propaganda. The attacks on US policy as they relate to these issues in the Soviet note of July 24 indicated that they continued to form the basis for the Soviet charge that the US was obstructing a relaxation of tension.

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specifically urged the US to conduct tests on its own rather than on its territory, citing the Soviet example.

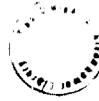
Natural Disasters to be Blamed on Tests By publishing and broadcasting abroad on July 7 a letter to the chief of the Hydrometeorological Service of the USSR from the President of the Japanese Meteorological Society, Moscow appeared to give support to a program calling for an immediate ban on the testing, manufacture and use of weapons of mass destruction and urging the publication of "experimental data on the pollution of the atmosphere and other weather phenomena which might follow hydrogen bomb tests." The letter suggested that pollution of the atmosphere by radioactive ash might cause "cold spells in summer" and affect the productivity of agriculture through the poisoning of sea water and atmospheric precipitation. A similar "scientific" analysis was printed in the Czech party organ Rude Pravo on July 17 signed by four Czech meteorologists. In both cases, the letters were sufficiently cautious, so as to avoid a charge of scientific misrepresentation, while permitting the USSR, if it found it expedient, to make the US the scapegoat for flood and drought throughout the world.

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Atomic Information:

An atomic-powered electric power station of 100,000 kilowatts will expend not more than 200 to 250 grams of uranium daily, according to a "Pioneerskaya Pravda" article by Prof. Yakovlev heard on the Home Service. In a discussion of atomic power he considers the possibility of atomic energy "rearranging the planet" by huge construction projects and interplanetary travel which will enable man to become the true master of the earth, and later the universe.

Information received subsequent to writing of paper, from Sao Paulo broadcast to Brazil dated July 29.

The Soviet delegation to the World Electric Power Conference in Rio de Janeiro told the press that the USSR plans in June, 1955 to dedicate a 5,000 kilowatt atomic energy plant, and that in the near future two more atomic plants will be placed in operation, one of 5,000 kilowatts and one of 100,000 kilowatts.

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